

EXHIBIT 1

September 1, 2021

RE: Tiffany C. Vesterman

Teacher

John J. Pershing Intermediate School 220 Request for a Religious Exemption

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to respectfully inform you that due to my sincerely held religious beliefs, I am seeking a religious exemption from New York City's COVID-19 vaccine requirement.

According to the United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission under Title VII of the Civil Rights Acts of 1964, individuals have the right to be free from discrimination on the basis of religion. As part of their religious beliefs, many individuals object to vaccines. Employers are required to accommodate religious observances and practices, unless doing so imposes an undue hardship on the business.

The content of this letter is of an extremely personal nature, and as such, I ask that this letter only be shared with those who are in charge of approving the application. I would prefer not to have other people aware of this exemption application, as I fear the lack of understanding for myself.

In order to fully understand my religious perspective and how I have come to decide not to immunize myself, I would like to give a history of my personal religious journey, which has led me to apply for religious exemption to immunization. I hope this will help the reader of

this letter get a better understanding of my unique and personal perspective on my relationship with God.

I grew up in a small family in Brooklyn, NY. I was raised as Catholic by parents who were traditionally religious and strict. We went to church every Sunday and celebrated all the major holidays. My parents insisted that I attend private Catholic school for my entire educational career, even into graduate school. I received all major sacraments from having been baptized shortly after I was born until I was married to my husband in church. When I was in Catholic school I always had a special relationship with The Trinity and Blessed Mother. I prayed and developed my own way of communicating with God and the Blessed Mother through the rosary. I loved attending Church and seeing all the rites and rituals that it entailed. I had candles and religious statues and icons in my room as a child and prayed to them regularly.

In high school, I started to explore and question God and His existence. I started to understand that God was the same as the Life Flow in ourselves, the same as Spirit and Universal Energy. No matter what you choose to call it, it is God that you are connecting to in a spiritual and prayerful manner. We are the energy that everything comes from and then returns to after our physical life on Earth.

While I was young, I developed health issues that caused me to think about God in a more serious manner and caused me to want to connect more with God and His healing Divine powers. It was in the fifth grade that I was introduced to Yoga and breathing techniques,

and mantras. I was under a doctor's care and with that I was also practicing yoga and all of the techniques that I learned in class. In yoga, you are taught about the energy flow and breath of life called chi. I saw this as a direct connection with God being that He is also the life force that sustains us. All of these pieces of knowledge, connecting to the Divine Energy, God and Yoga helped me work through self healing mantras, energy healing, meditation and visualization. I began to understand that God is all around me in everything and everyone and we are all one because we are all energy. *For the Spirit of God has made me, and the breath of the Almighty gives me life. – Job 33:4* He is the energy that provides and sustains life with everyone and everything on the planet. He breathes the breath of life into us.

Because God provides the Divine Spark, He is in everyone and He is directly connected with me. He is a healing force as well as a destructive force that binds the universe together. God is the Natural Law. He provides the beauty on this Earth in nature, in the humans and animals around us all. I see God when the seasons change, when it rains or snows, when the flowers bloom, the birds fly and the insects pollinate. God has provided a perfectly balanced ecosystem that will heal itself when it is necessary. Energy cannot be created nor destroyed, it can only change forms and God is helping all of these magnificent things happen. Buddha said, *If we could see the miracle of a single flower clearly, our whole life would change.* I absolutely agree with this, nature is God and God is within us. We are as beautiful and as miraculous as each single flower.

Throughout high school and college I became more and more spiritual and developed a deeper relationship with God by seeing Him in the people around me. I met many different people in college and saw that God was in all of them even if they were not Catholic, which was no longer what I identified with. It helped to deepen my relationship with God in a different manner because I saw the spark of Him in those around me. I saw that my beliefs were shared by many different faiths as well. I continued on with my yoga practice and felt a stronger connection with the Divine than I had in a long time. Because of my connections with these people of all backgrounds, I cemented my firm belief against abortion. God has created all of these beautiful humans that I have had the pleasure of meeting and who have influenced my life and what would have happened if they had been aborted?

In December of 2014, my Aunt Maria, who was like a mother to me, had a serious discussion with me. She was a woman who had a great influence on my life so I listened to what she had to say. In the past, I had always taken her advice into account because she had never led me astray. She, a devout Christian, spoke to me of the purity of our bodies and how God will help us in our time of need. She told me how the life I was living was not in pure accordance with the Will of God and she felt that she needed to speak to me as if I was her daughter. She mentioned to me what the ingredients of vaccines are. She showed me the ingredients list of what is in the vaccines including aborted fetal tissue. Believing what I did about the purity of human life and how I regarded the joy that people brought to me, I was devastated. I had vaccinated my child up until that point and knew from that moment on, I would never again vaccinate my child or myself. I couldn't reconcile how I had sinned and gone against God and I have prayed for His forgiveness every day since that discussion.

I worried that I was severing my and my child's connection to God if our bodies weren't pure. God has made us all in His image and likeness, so why was I doing anything to change that. I prayed on this conversation and discussed it with my husband. We turned to the spiritual books that we read and we prayed about it. We knew that in the end we had to listen to God and to His call to us to stop immunizing our child.

On January 22, 2016, Catholic and Orthodox Christians stood in solidarity on the occasion of the 43rd anniversary of Roe v. Wade. They made the following statement;

"As our communities firmly believe in the sanctity of life, the faithful – along with many people of other traditions and goodwill – lament the legal circumstances that facilitate abortion and the cultural phenomena that present abortion as the only choice for expectant mothers experiencing difficult conditions. We recognize that the choice to abort an unborn child ultimately reflects the broken condition of humanity. We remind the world of our common teaching that life begins at the earliest moments of conception and that life, at all stages of its development, is sacred. We denounce the termination of a life as a response to unwanted pregnancies or as a method of overcoming social and economic challenges. We embrace the mothers and the couples who, in spite of difficulties, choose to bring their pregnancy to term. At the same time, however, we invite those who may have undergone or facilitated an abortion to turn to Christ with contrite hearts, seeking to overcome their grief through His forgiveness, mercy and healing."

- *(Archbishop Demetrios of America, Chairman, Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the USA; Metropolitan Savas of Pittsburgh, Chairman Committee for Church & Society*

Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the USA; Most Reverend Joseph E. Kurtz, Archbishop of Louisville, President, U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops; Timothy Michael Cardinal Dolan Archbishop of New York, Chairman, Committee on Pro-Life Activities, U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops)

The development of each of the three current COVID-19 vaccines currently in use involved aborted fetal tissue or human embryonic stem cell derivation lines:

- Johnson & Johnson/Janssen: Fetal cell cultures are used to produce and manufacture the J&J COVID-19 vaccine and the final formulation of this vaccine includes residual amounts of the fetal host cell proteins (≤ 0.15 mcg) and/or host cell DNA (≤ 3 ng).
- Pfizer/BioNTech: The HEK-293 abortion-related cell line was used in research related to the development of the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine.
- Moderna/NIAID: Aborted fetal cell lines were used in both the development and testing of Moderna's COVID-19 vaccine.

Specifically, the Covid-19 inoculations are manufactured using the aborted "10% Fetal Clone II" from the HEK293T/17 (ATCC CRL-11268), Vero E6 (ATCC) fetus cell line. <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41586-020-2622-0>

The J&J vaccine is an adenoviral vector grown in the PER.C6 cell line that originated from a healthy 18-week-old aborted child. The Pfizer and Moderna vaccines were tested using the morally compromised HEK-293 cell line, originating from a child aborted in the Netherlands in 1972.

<https://www.nature.com/articles/s41586-020-2622-0>

After college I began studying Buddhism and yoga more. I trained to become a children's yoga instructor in New York City. My teacher, Rev. Sam Rudra Swartz was always reminding us that the light within us honors the light within others and to me that very much helped put the puzzle pieces together. *The man whose self is disciplined in yoga, whose perception is the same everywhere, sees himself in all creatures and all creatures in himself.* - Bhagavad Gita 6:29. I was connected to God and I was honoring another person's connection with God as well. I studied many things and realized that learning from Swami Satchidananda and his teaching, "*Truth is One. Paths Are Many.*" Having had conversations like this with my friends and colleagues, it just fit and sounded perfectly, because universal truths fell into place and everything was illuminated. Wise ones, from every religion all reach the same conclusion even if their way is different. Outside we look different, but inside *we are all the same and made in the image and of the light of God.* He taught that if you simplify your life, you will have less clutter and see things differently. You will interact differently and in a more pure and God-like way. Swami Satchidananda taught that once you choose a path that fits you to explore it consistently, while respecting the path others have chosen.

I have been fortunate to be blessed as a mother and when I was pregnant that was when I felt the most connected to God as He was having me create life to bring onto this amazing planet. When my child was born, looking into their eyes, I knew that I was connecting to God. I felt Him in their presence and in a deeper way in my life. From that moment, my path with energy work and my deepening spirituality has only grown. My child and I were

one in the same as God and I are one in the same. We are never divided from God. *'Although the Supersoul [i.e. God within], appears to be divided, He is never divided. He is situated as one.'* - Bhagavad Gita Chap 13, verse 17. I have come to know God in a more intimate manner and have had a deeper connection with Him. I have learned more about energy healing by learning and practicing Reiki as well as continuing to teach yoga to children. I know these practices combine God's healing and balance in my life. I have applied my faith in God and these practices to help manage ailments and illnesses that I have had from a young age. When I pray I often see Jesus and the angels and they come to me and speak to me in a manner that reminds me that I am connected directly to them. *"The kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation, nor will people say, 'Here it is' or 'There it is,' because the kingdom of God is within you."* - Luke 17:21

I choose to continue to bring my Catholic faith into my spiritual practice because they, to me, are all one in the same. God is all powerful and all knowing, yet we are one in the same with Him and the cocreators of our life with Him. My family and I still attend church as well as practice spirituality in our home. We pray and we celebrate the holidays as well as the equinoxes for the change in season. Those are the times when I really feel close to God because He is the creator of all in nature. I meditate and pray daily and practice energy work to keep myself balanced and my energy and life force close to God. Being that I am a constant student, I continue to explore my faith and the spirituality of others to remind myself that we are all One with God. My love for Him grows as I age and as I learn because I see more around me that reminds me on a daily basis that we are One. God is a part of my life and spiritual practice daily in my home and when I step out of my home. I share my

love of the Divine with my friends and family and they know of my connection with Jesus.

The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by human hands. And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything. Rather, he himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else. – Acts

17:24-25

Having had many tragedies in my life, and lost many close to me, my Faith in God has not waivered. He has always been a constant source of support and comfort to me when I am in my time of grief and need. I am absolutely sure that my path is correct and I live every day thinking about what the next right step is to take and what God would do. Matthew 17:20 - *And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.* I have overcome many trials in my life because of God. My Faith is unwavering that he will heal me and protect me from all that I need.

In the past few years, I have broadened my study of energy work to studying nature and natural law. I have learned that the solution to everything lies within us. Disease needs to be seen as a problem and we need to search for the solution within us. This is the way that I approach my life and my body. When my body is treated in a kind and natural manner, I feel well. I support my body with good and proper nutrition and vitamins and minerals. When my body feels out of sorts, I connect with God and ask him how I can assist in healing myself. I pray, meditate, practice energy healing, proper nutrition, and cleansing, to assist

my energy to rebalance and heal. I do believe the source of healing lies within our bodies not outside. If we are made in the image and likeness of God, we need to keep ourselves sacred and free of foreign bodies to stay connected to Him. Matthew 9:22 - *But Jesus turned him about, and when he saw her, he said, Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole. And the woman was made whole from that hour.*

Immunization is a source outside of us. Health comes with purity of mind and purity of mind comes with purity of blood and body. I have read the ingredients of all immunizations and the chemicals that are in them are foreign and unnatural, and as such, should never be injected into any person. I recognize through my interpretation of my blended personal religious beliefs that immunizations make the body and blood impure. I view immunizations as a direct contradiction to my faith and personal religious belief system. *Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. 2 Corinthians 7:1*

I do recognize some merit in conventional medicine and do seek medical care when I am in a diseased state. I have had two surgeries in my life, one was a c-section to bring my child into the world. My convictions and connection to God show me that there is a huge difference in seeking conventional medical care for a body, which is in an eminent crisis, and seeking conventional medical care for a body that is not in crisis. Immunizations are just that, seeking medical care for a body not in crisis and, therefore, are directly against my personal religious beliefs. What I do know for sure is that I will not seek medical intervention, for me or my family when our bodies are healthy. Immunizations are just

that; seeking an invasive medical procedure when the body is healthy. This is in direct contradiction to my personal religious beliefs.

I hope that this letter sufficiently conveys my personal religious beliefs to the reader. I understand that my beliefs and connection to my God is unique to me and may seem strange to some. I respectfully request that my personal religious beliefs be protected under New York State law and ask for this waiver to be approved.

Sincerely,

Tiffany C. Vesterman